

**The Village Church – Rancho Santa Fe**  
**Week #8 – Adult Bible Study**

**I Corinthians 6:12-20**

**October 29 & 30, 2024**

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1. A root issue for the Corinthians that underlay many of Paul's talking points with them in his letter was about personal freedom and autonomy. Their attitude, engendered by the pagan culture from which they came, and abetted by their misconstrual of the effects of grace in a believer's life, was that they were at liberty to do whatever they pleased. Such an attitude, Paul argued, destroyed their true relationship with God and the community of the church.
  - a. An "enlightened" person (wise in philosophy) is free to do whatever he chooses
  - b. The philosopher Epictetus promoted this idea extensively
  - c. Paul himself preached a form of freedom from Jewish law
2. The presenting case here is that some of the Corinthians were going to prostitutes
  - a. Prostitution was both legal and widely accepted as social convention
  - b. It was expected that men would have sexual relations with boys and/or female harlots
  - c. Apparently, some of the Corinthian Christians were continuing this practice under the guise of practicing their freedom in Christ
3. In this section, Paul uses a form of writing or communication called a *diatribe*, an imaginary dialogue between himself and the Corinthian Christians. Below is Richard Hays' notation about this dialogue (6:12-14).
  - a. Corinthians: "*All things are lawful for me.*"
    - i. Paul's rebuttal: "*But not all things are beneficial.*"
  - b. Corinthians: "*All things are lawful for me.*"
    - i. Paul: "*But I will not be dominated by anything.*"
  - c. Corinthians: "*Food is meant for the stomach...*"
    - i. Paul: "*The body is meant (not for fornication but) for the Lord,*"
  - d. Corinthians: "*...and the stomach for food.*"
    - i. Paul: "*and the Lord for the body.*"
  - e. Corinthians: "*And God will destroy...*"
    - i. Paul: "*and God raised...*"
  - f. Corinthians: "*...both one and the other.*"
    - i. Paul: "*...the Lord [Jesus] and will also raise us by his power.*"
4. The Corinthians contend that the physical body (and the physical world) is not important, therefore what one does in the body is inconsequential
  - a. And, therefore, satisfying physical appetites is harmless
5. Paul's points:
  - a. The body is very important, both because it is part of God's good creation and God has acted/will act to redeem it in resurrection
  - b. A *truly* wise person does what is, in fact, *good*, not merely self-indulgent
  - c. Indulgence in satisfying appetites actually leads *away* from freedom and toward slavery to one's appetites
    - i. Thus, those who use prostitutes are giving control of themselves over to prostitutes
6. Concerning "food" – it seems the Corinthians are making the point about food in an analogical way to actually discuss sex – thus, "bodies are made for/with sex, thus sex should be indulged"
  - a. Paul's rebuttal took him into the fundamental meaning of the good news: the in Jesus Christ, we are redeemed in body, soul, and spirit
  - b. Salvation is *not* escape from the physical world: it is redemption of the physical world
    - i. This is part of what is meant through affirmation of the resurrection of the body
      1. For more on "bodily resurrection" see I Corinthians 15
  - c. God's raising of Jesus *validates* the physical body, therefore those who are united with Christ (believers) are in a relationship that has implications for physical life
  - d. Verse 17 – Paul uses same term for union with Christ that he uses for union with a prostitute
  - e. Union with Christ means that Christ "owns" the body of the believer
  - f. The Jewish (and then also Christian) understanding of sexual intercourse is that it is much more than merely physical: it is a metaphysical/spiritual union of man and woman, thus also union with Christ is a real bonding together. Bonding/union with a prostitute corrupts this union with Christ, and produces both defilement and confusion.

7. Verse 18 again picks up the diatribe:
  - a. Corinthians: “*Every sin a person commits is outside the body*”
    - i. Paul: “*...the fornicator sins against his own body.*”
  - b. Again, the Corinthians argue that bodily actions have no significance, but Paul argues just the opposite
  - c. Paul – The individual’s body is actually the temple of the Holy Spirit, in much the same way that the church/community is the residing place of the Holy Spirit
8. Verse 19 – believers now belong to the Lord; we do not belong to ourselves
  - a. Believers, therefore, focus on devotion and service to God
  - b. Prostitution does damage on two levels: to the individual, and also to the community of which the individual is a part
  - c. Being subject to Christ has serious implications for *every* aspect of life, whether it be physical, spiritual, communal, psychological, or any other realm of human existence

### Questions for Your Life Today

- A. With an understanding of bodily resurrection and the validation by God of physical life, what implication does this have for your understanding of heaven? And of how you treat/use your body in this life?
- B. With an understanding of the body as the temple/dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, what does this say about practices of holiness and goodness with the physical realm of this life?
- C. With an understanding of our bodies as belonging to the Lord, what implications does this have for the decisions we make about our bodies? Who gets to decide, and based on what criteria, about what we do with our bodies?

Notes by The Rev. Dr. Jack Baca, Senior Pastor, The Village Church, Rancho Santa Fe, California

#### Resources:

- Interpretation Commentary on First Corinthians, Richard B. Hays, John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1997
- Interpretation Commentary on Second Corinthians, Ernest Best, John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1987
- The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of 1 Corinthians – Life in the Local Church, David Prior, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1985
- The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of 2 Corinthians – Power in Weakness, Paul Barnett, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1988
- The Communicator’s Commentary, 1, 2 Corinthians, Kenneth L. Chafin, Word Books, Waco, Texas, 1985